

Testimony of Benjamin Barnes
Before
Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee
January 20, 2011

Good morning Chairpersons Looney and Janowski, Ranking Members Fasano and Piscopo and other distinguished members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is Benjamin Barnes, and I am here before you today because Governor Malloy has asked me to serve as the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management. I appreciate the chance to appear before you today and look forward to answering any questions that you may have for me.

First, I must say that I am humbled by the opportunity that Governor Malloy has presented to me, and grateful to him for the confidence he has shown in me.

My professional background has been in public service at the local level. I started working at the Hamden Housing Authority while I was a graduate student at New York University twenty years ago. I moved on to work as a city planner for the city of Hartford, as an analyst for the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, and as a planner in St. Petersburg, Florida, before returning Connecticut to work for then-Mayor Malloy in Stamford. Between 2001 and 2009, I served in three different capacities for the city of Stamford, including Director of Public Safety, Health and Welfare, Director of Administration, and Director of Operations. Those positions constitute three of the four charter-established positions that report directly to the Mayor under Stamford's form of government. Most recently, I served as the Operating Officer for the Bridgeport Public Schools from February through December, 2010.

At the city of Stamford, and to an even greater degree in Bridgeport, I have been responsible for developing and implementing balanced budgets in adverse circumstances. I hope that in those situations I have been able to find creative ways to protect services while adhering to principles of responsible and transparent budgeting. I hope that I have been helpful to elected decision-makers by forthrightly identifying the challenges that they face and developing honest solutions to them. I look forward to doing that here for the state of Connecticut.

It is true that the short-term challenge of crafting a balanced budget that reflects the values and priorities of Governor Malloy is all-consuming. Nevertheless, I also accept that stewardship of OPM will require that I strengthen the agency to the benefit of the state of Connecticut. I take that mission very seriously, and believe that there is considerable work to be done in that regard.

My first goal within the agency is to strengthen OPM's capacity as the driver of policy and managerial excellence for the state of Connecticut. I believe that the state will benefit from increased attention to the efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and efficacy of state agencies as they pursue their respective missions. I hope that I can contribute to a culture of continuous

improvement, aggressive goal-setting, and results not only at OPM, but across state government. I see OPM as the Governor's principle tool for making state government live up to our shared aspirations.

Unquestionably, one way that OPM can carry out this mission is through our role in the budget process. There will be very difficult decisions for Connecticut, and it will be difficult to maintain and improve our organizations in such trying times. But I believe that we should not accept that bad times and budget deficits are a good reason to defer our aspirations for progress and improvement. Government needs to be better run, and we will find a way to do that within the resources we have available.

To serve as OPM secretary is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I hope to be able to honor that opportunity with integrity, boldness, and creativity. With your support, I look forward to serving Governor Malloy and the state of Connecticut. Respectfully, I ask for your strong consideration of my appointment.

I will be happy to answer any of your questions.